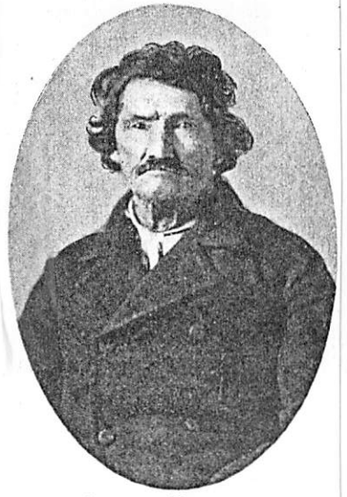


COLONEL BRIDGER.

BRIDGER, JAMES (1804-1881), a hunter, trapper, fur trader, and guide, was one of the greatest American frontiersmen. In 1822, he joined a fur company and soon became a mountain man.

While searching for furs in the Rocky Mountains in 1824, Bridger became probably the first white man ever to see the Great Salt Lake. He and a friend rediscovered the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains, and he was one of the first white men to see the wonders of the area that became Yellowstone National Park.

In 1843, when the fur trade declined, he built Fort Bridger in southwest Wyoming as a way station to supply immigrants on the Oregon Trail. During his 40 years in the mountains, Bridger took three Indian wives, none of whom survived him.

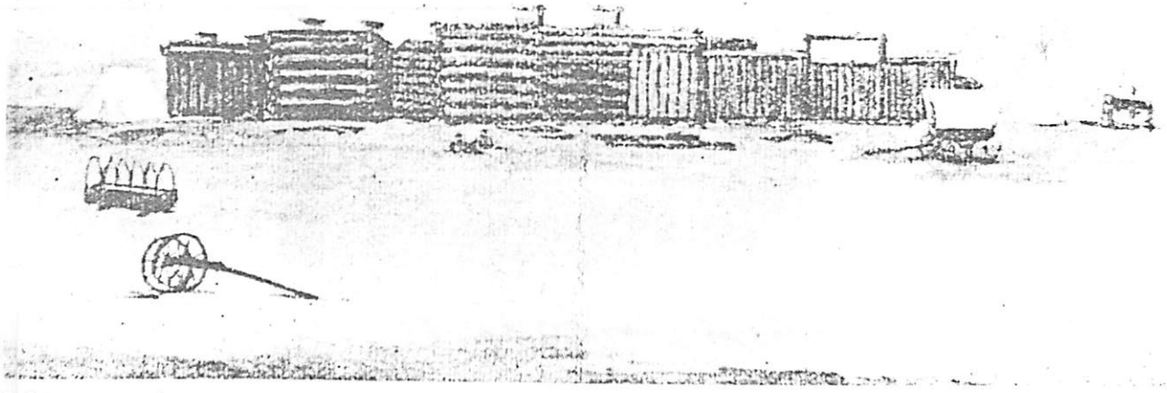
Bridger's great store of geographical knowledge proved valuable when the overland stage routes were planned. He climaxed a useful career by scouting for exploring parties and for army expeditions against the Indians.

Bridger strongly opposed the Mormons and eagerly guided U.S. troops into Utah during the *Utah*, or *Mormon, War* (1857-1858). He guided the Powder River expedition of 1865, and became the first person to measure the Bozeman Trail, about 600 miles (970 kilometers) from Fort Laramie, Wyo., to Virginia City, Mont. Bridger was born in Richmond, Va., the son of an innkeeper. He died near Kansas City.

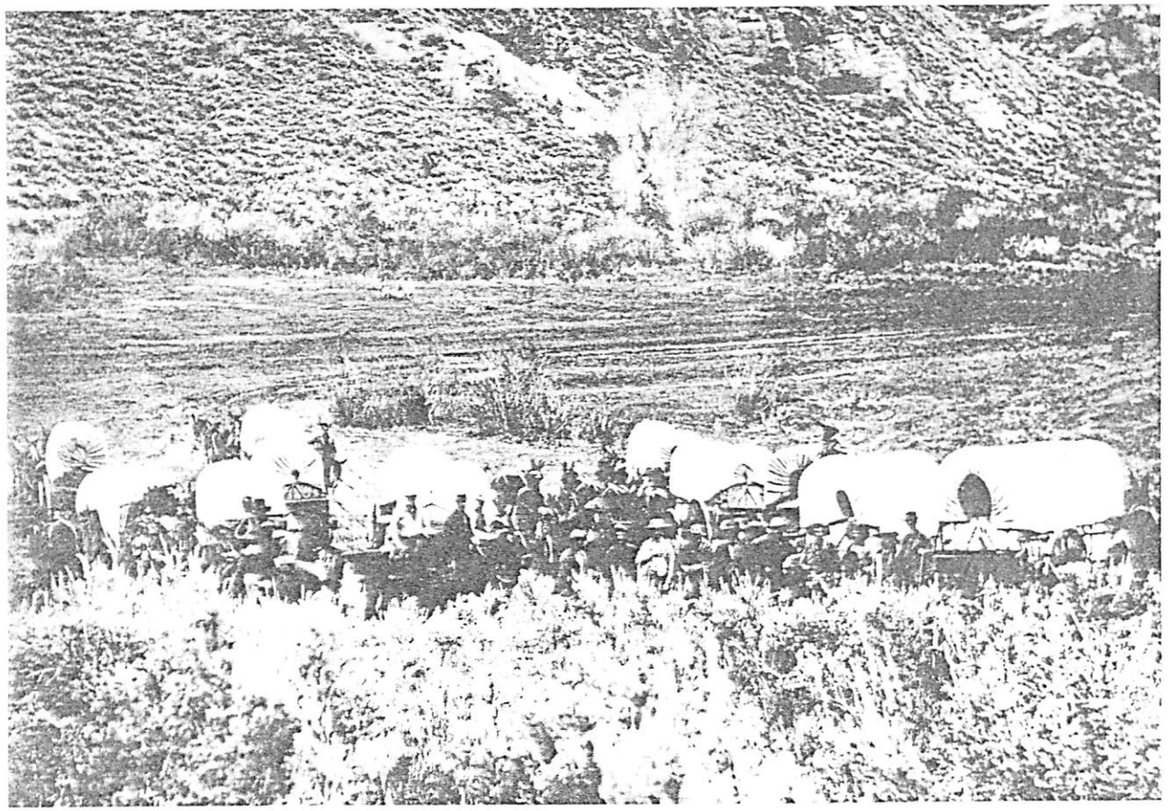
HOWARD R. LAMAR

James Bridger scouted on the western frontier for the United States government, and helped map the historic Oregon Trail.

Drawing by Frederic Remington, Bettmann Archive



This artist's imaginative drawing shows the rustic simplicity of the early fort.



Situated on the Mormon Trail, Fort Bridger was a supply station for emigrants.